

Saving Intimate Voice in the Humanities

The Place of Preservative Care ¹

our whole lives may have the character of finding that anthem

which would be native to our own tongue

-- Henry Bugbee ²

If I were asked two decades ago if Salman Rushdie were a dangerous man, I would immediately place him as the author of The Satanic Verses, a book that brought a death threat down on his life, drove him into hiding for a number of years, and brought bomb threats to quiet Berkeley bookshops. Is Salman Rushdie still a dangerous man? Yes and no. It's true that years ago he planted political dynamite at the base of our cultural bridges. But if he's a danger today, or at least a source of anxiety, it's because he suggests that the world is more than bombs and politics, that there is a forgotten non-political intimate world well worth voicing. Given the persuasiveness of his prose, he presents a threat, in schools of humanities, because his magically intimate voice, when it appears in its power, runs counter to the interests of reigning monitors. He might be entertaining, but his unabashed celebrations of mystery and song and love seem to mock the disciplinary frames of Marxian class analysis, Lacanian desire, Neo-Colonial critique, and so forth. His danger today lies in his pure delight in an immediacy that taunts academic

¹ Thanks to an anonymous reader for invaluable suggestions on an earlier draft.

² The Inward Morning: Philosophical Explorations in Journal Form, foreword by Gabriel Marcel, 1958, reissue by University of Georgia Press, 1999, 221.

reductions of a familiar sort. I'll display two passages that unabashedly sing the allure of 'mysteries', that sing the promise of intimate transfigurations, that evoke worlds we can't manage. These passages make him an object of anxiety in the academy.

Take the striking exaltation bursting from the pages of The Ground Beneath Her Feet.³

Five mysteries hold the keys to the unseen: the act of love, and the birth of a baby, and the contemplation of great art, and being in the presence of death or disaster, and hearing the human voice lifted in song. These are the occasions when the bolts of the universe fly open and we are given a glimpse of what is hidden; an eff of the ineffable. Glory bursts upon us in such hours: the dark glory of earthquakes, the slippery wonder of new life, the radiance of Vina's singing.⁴

If our hermeneutics of suspicion or deconstructive tactics have deflated all mysteries, then we'll have little to praise in an evocation like this. Yet I think there is much to praise, embrace, and welcome in this passage, much to preserve – to enact, as it were, by reading aloud in a classroom. But have we lost the knack for passing on, reenacting, the visceral drive of sentences like these? I'll try to say why it's so hard to hear, and rehear these words. And that will involve a rather polemical account of the settings of teaching that discount such exercises in hearing the affective-cognitive flow of words as they unfold. Let me caution, however, that I have nothing to say about Rushdie's *oeuvre*, nor about how to teach The Satanic Verses, nor even whether, all things considered, one should. And I'll have nothing to say about The Ground Beneath Her Feet

³ Salman Rushdie, The Ground Beneath Her Feet, (London: Piccador, 2000), 19.

⁴ Ibid. 20.

and its connections with Rushdie's fugitive life with Bono and U2. I won't even glance at the deadly business of a world-class writer with a price on his head.

We who teach in the humanities may take infinite private pleasure in prose and poetry that evokes things that under the harsh interrogating lights of the academy we'd hide discretely under our desks, or disown, for 'political' purposes, as passé or sophomoric. Hold Rushdie's "an eff of the ineffable" in an ungenerous light, and we have something cute, but too like meringue to get one's professional teeth in. I call this passage 'iconic' and revert to it often (among many others) in my classes. Do my colleagues have similar iconic passages they introduce to establish a mood in "English Lit", "Religious Studies," or "Intro to Humanities"?

Here is another wonderful Rushdie passage that I suspect we'd disown under professional lights. In our professorial moods, it may only make us blush. It's about singing. Reading too much of this sort of thing, from Rushdie or elsewhere, will seem if not dangerous, then beyond the pale.

Why do we care about singers? Wherein lies the power of songs? Maybe it derives from the sheer strangeness of there being singing in the world. The note, the scale, the chords; melodies, harmonies, arrangements, symphonies, ragas, Chinese operas, jazz, the blues: that such things should exist, that we should have discovered the magical intervals and distances that yield the poor cluster of notes, all within the span of a human hand, from which we can build our cathedrals of sound, is as alchemical a mystery as mathematics, or wine, or love. Maybe the birds taught us. Maybe not. Maybe we are just creatures in search of exaltation. We don't have much of it. Our lives are not what we deserve; they are, let us agree, in many painful

ways deficient. Song turns them into something else. Song shows us a world that is worthy of our yearning, it shows us our selves as they might be, if we were worthy of the world.

The discursive space we enter as teachers in a university or college seems uncongenial to the musical or rhetorical moment of reading these Rushdie passages aloud. There's no argument, and if there are truths, they are not truths of fact or theory. Professors are skilled at sorting method from fact, and both from theory, but what skills have we learned – methodological skills -- for tracing the cognitive-imaginative-affective impacts that drive these words one to the next, word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence, through aural and heartfelt space? Perhaps “bursts of glory”, or the thought that “our lives are not what we deserve” ring true (or not) in a way that defies our professional expertise, that mocks academic sophistication. We cringe or chuckle dismissively. Doesn't that hard-earned PhD certify that we've outgrown citations of mystery or death, or intimations that we are ‘creatures in search of exaltation’?

There's a quasi-religious or ‘spiritual’ tonality in these passages that can easily put off. But “the religious” is not just a domain of bombs and power, dogma and rhetorical excess. It's also a register of the heart and imagination. Evocations of wonders and tremors of love and birth, of song and death, arriving often as ineffable epiphanies or revelations, are too valuable a root of our humanity to be dismissed as part of a dangerous “religious” sensibility. And that sensibility is not so ineffable (or sophomoric) as to defy generous classroom exploration. A “vital center” of songs, love or birth, as these are undergone experientially, can be tentatively explored, impressionistic as that exploration may well be. There is no need to flinch at letting “dark glory” or “an eff of the ineffable” burst in on our classrooms.

We spend our lives *knowing* texts, critiquing them, being good exegetes. But Rushdie in his passages offers a love or birth, art or death, poetry or song that are not propositional, not, in their immediacy, moments of objective knowledge or stiff critique. Nor can their immediate experiential impacts survive long under an onslaught from critical theory, deconstruction, hermeneutical suspicion, or various styles of cultural study. We are given epiphanies, moments of vision. These are irreducible Augenblicken, “occasions when the bolts of the universe fly open”. Even an extended thought, like the reminder that “Our lives are not what we deserve; they are, let us agree, in many painful ways deficient. Song turns them into something else” functions more as a glimpse of truth to ponder than a proposition to test or break down. And speaking of what ‘we deserve’ or the transformative power of song, can sound uncomfortably close to a religious moralist, someone pointing to our flaws and touting a singing salvation. Better toss that from the classroom! All that astonishment, tremor, or transport, that sense of “being unworthy of the world”, can seem extra-curricular, well outside classroom sobrieties. Does Rushdie (at least in these passages) force us to set aside the orderly arrangement of our intellectual loves – set Plato’s Diotima aside – in favor of a drunken Alcibiades who forces a descent into riotous, dangerous, desire?

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We need information about cultures, their histories, and the heroines who inhabit them, and we need to hone skills of reading, analysis, and interpretation. Classrooms are sites for knowledge and analysis, both carried by the flow of our affections and troubled by the flow of our fears and anxieties. As well as preserving the glories that burst upon us, preservative care flows as grief for disasters that befall us, care for things lost. Departments in the humanities articulate and reanimate things worthy of replication and dissemination – good arguments, good historical

accounts, fine poetry, fine art, fine philosophy, necessary novels, and striking aberrations or degradations of any of these. Our preservative care can take the shape of salvations.

Ortega Y Gasset tells us in the preface to his Meditations on Quixote to expect “essays in intellectual love”-- essays, he says, that provide “. . . no informative value whatever; they are not summaries, either -- they are rather what a humanist of the seventeenth century would have called ‘salvations’.”⁵ These ‘salvations’ display a preservative care, a love for Quixote that saves Quixote for us. And if that battling comic genius, at once fool and knight and saint, comes alive through Ortega’s “salvations”, it is we, along with Quixote, who are healed.

Ortega says his essays will take up “. . . a man, a book, a picture, a landscape, an error, a sorrow” and then seek “. . . to carry it by the shortest route to its fullest significance.” This might describe the vocation of scholars in any century (not just 17th century Spanish humanists, or their 20th or 21st century incarnations). Teaching religion or the birth of the novel or the healing of comedy and laughter might be preserving “a man, a picture, a book, a sorrow” against the ravages of neglect and time. Quixote is both special and one of many. Exemplary figures and texts are legion and yet each, in its own way, is exceptional. Rushdie has us attend to and preserve the wonder of birth or the radiance of song. I hope in my class to evoke and preserve the radiance of his singer, allow that radiance to happen, then and there. I can set a stage, listen for subtle, perhaps shy responsiveness in the look and awkward or eloquent words of this student or that, and get out of the way, letting it happen.

The familiar techniques of criticism or theory are fine in their place. We become expert in teaching and applying them. I could run through their virtues, but my interest is not in their relative strengths or differences, what each can accomplish, but in what gets forgotten as we

⁵ Ortega, Meditations on Quixote, 31.

strive to refine our use of Freud or Derrida, Durkheim or Feuerbach, Eagleton or Adorno. An open response to wonder or dread, to moral horror or the primal mystery of birth, is hard to teach or evoke and emerges at an experiential, pre-theoretical level. Yet to abandon the experiential is to lose intimacy with the world and ourselves.

Social science can give me descriptions, even ‘thick’ ones, of how death can be handled – by them (by that society over there). It can’t give me the visceral feel of how I might experience deaths around me, or the feel of my disowning any such experience, or the elusiveness of an image of my death. Deconstruction or a hermeneutics of suspicion may get me to see the way death is a cover for this or that, or how our writing of death is deeply incoherent, an *aporia*, or ‘impossibility’, perhaps. But such analysis holds death at arm’s length, at a safe distance, forbidding visceral contact. Rushdie wants to instill the wonder of song – not just report on another’s experience of it, or a theoretician’s unmasking or deconstruction. If we frame the wonder of song in the theories of Lacan or Nietzsche, we’d learn something, surely, but also break the thread Rushdie spins; we must strive to keep Lacan and Rushdie alive.

Garrett Stewart, speaking as the head of a renowned department of English, avers quite astonishingly that literary scholars have lost the “skills and taste and aspiration” for literature. By this he means that focus has shifted from riding a line of writing where “. . . argument and articulation grow indissoluble at the level of affect – and hence of conviction” to a focus on handling the polemics of theory, where literature is evidence for one theory or another.⁶ The appeals of Rusidie’s sentences go well beyond, or sidestep completely, a love of theoretical assessment. The wonder of love or song, as Rushdie conveys it, sidesteps any theory meant to

⁶ Gareth Stewart, “The Avoidance of Stanley Cavell,” Contending with Stanley Cavell, ed.

Russell B. Goodman, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 153.

corral it. (And what goes for wonder applies equally to the terrifyingly evil or forbiddingly uncanny.) Wonders precisely defy domestication by science, critical theories, or hermeneutical suspicions. A wonder explained is a wonder no longer. A wonder reenacted, read along the surface of its affect, is a wonder sustained. I assume these points can strike home without a detailed and no doubt contentious assessment of the variety of critical-theoretical approaches in play in departments of English, Art History, Comparative Literature, or Religious Studies (for example). It suffices, I hope, to say that explanatory and deflationary schematic analysis, powerful in its own right, works at a price. It brackets my experienced affections or anxieties, and suspends experiential absorption. Retreating to reductive readings leaves me in control, but bereft of those experiential deliverances that it is the genius of the humanities to preserve.

Reading can require preliminary critique in the name of experiential deliverance. I deflate puffery to create space for more viable growth, reduce error to allow broader significance to surface, theorize the brain or political life or 'nature writing' to highlight infirmities and cracks in depictions, and so let space be liberated for hope and for a more lively range of experience and life. We clean out the shoddy to clear space for revelation and delight (or for acknowledgement of bottomless pain) -- whether in Quixote or Brahms. Preservative care is an ever-widening love. As Ortega puts it, it brings a theme or person or object, into "its fullest significance". This does not happen once for all.

Love facilitates the fullest significance of the next step, we might say, since Hamlet, Quixote, or Brahms are unfinished and keep growing (under our care). An infant's exuberant chortle can step forward and expand through a decade or two toward the soaring power of an unexpected aria, but there are numerous steps of ever fuller significance along the way. Who knows where our children's responsiveness will take them? We don't. But the answer is

“nowhere” if a faltering care lets fields of significance fall into decay, wilting under the dehydrations of non-stop problematizing and critique. Like ill-treated living things, they will slowly die. The appreciative teacher is an appreciative critic. As curator of invaluable goods, we are charged to practice a hermeneutics of preservation. Texts, paintings, or figures from our pasts hide untapped plenitudes awaiting our care.

Long before I wrote on Thoreau or Melville, on Plato or The Book of Job, these fed ranges of my imagination and passions. Years later as a fledgling professor I was to pass on just those trials and glories of sympathy, outrage, intellect, and imagination that I had found (or that had found me) in great texts and works of art and music. They were moments that had saved me from spiritual immiseration. Should others be denied?

An abiding love for the lineaments of passion, imagination, and intelligence that inhere in our texts, traditions, and their embedded themes is a love I’m sure others share, but that has become the unspeakable love of our calling. A technical university devoted to the accumulation, reproduction, and dissemination of objective knowledge cannot utter its name. It is a somewhat religious passion, at least a vivid faith, and so dangerous – a passion that calls, it seems, for salvation in terms other than strict knowledge. That saving impulse is what Robert Pogue Harrison, a Stanford Professor of Comparative Literature, describes as the yearning to raise life from the dead, to remember the dead, to let their glory burst upon us -- that we may live with both the living and the dead.⁷

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Duke’s president welcomes freshmen with these thoughts. First, they should find in the university a place that is responsive to “the beauty of excellence in its many forms and the

⁷ See his extraordinary The Dominion of the Dead, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

pleasure of striving to attain it”. Second, a university is pulled by love of open-ended inquiry: “. . . nothing is yet the whole of the truth”, he warns, and so “. . . nothing is so true that it is not susceptible to expansion, challenge, revision, and deeper realization.”⁸ He frames learning as an aesthetic and moral project. Fact, theory, and method are framed in terms of a pursuit of beauty and virtue -- good things to preserve. To recognize beauty or virtue, like recognizing those truths that burst through in Rushdie’s evocations, means having ready heart and imagination. Yet no simply method prepares that inner citadel of receptivity.

It is a truth of beauty and excellence (not of brute fact nor complex theory) that mathematics can be elegant, that good mapping is alluring, that a simple but powerful experimental design has great beauty, that poetry, dance and philosophical argument have their own breath and rhythm, that a good story in history, biography, theater, or film is (or is not) irresistible. These are revealed truths, for no method can lead us to them (though good midwives can). Good teachers learn to let them surge up on their own. Unlike a discovery of new facts or the exercise of theories, in moments of revelation we can find our being in question (or renewed), as new experiential frames drop into place. To allow these shifts is to allow a passage from Rushdie to be subversive and saving.

I know in my bones that loss can renew love (as well as renew hurt). This is too close a truth to set out for public confirmation (though I can try to poetically evoke it or give it weight through the weight of my testimony, or that of the poets or otherwise inspired). I know with raw intimacy that power betrays all promise when unhinged from the good, that vengeance is poison,

⁸ Richard H. Brodhead, The Good of This Place: Values and Challenges in College Education, quoted in Stanley Hauerwas, The State of the University: Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 202.

that children are innocent, that we are defeated by time and that piety resides in attention to art, birth, death, voice, and love. These truths reflect my aesthetic and moral education, and can be passed on by exposing others to the worlds and words they animate, as often as not, congealed in the art, literature, and philosophy we husband in the humanities. Confirmation does not arrive from the well-oiled machinery of scholarly proofs. Their confirming impact can be whispered -- or arrive with the compelling thunder of Job's Voice from the Whirlwind, or strike with the simple aesthetic power of the Watson-Crick double-helix, or transfigure with the opening bars of Bach's Mass in B-minor. And not all truths are pleasant or welcome; we wince painfully at bitter truths; among them the bitter truth that we forever fall from excellence and beauty, strike slippery bottoms, and become implicated in evil. There are truths to mourn.

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To evoke hopes – possibilities -- for renewal and repair might mean to imagine a cave and then imagine exiting it, to imagine what traps us there, to feel in one's bones the need to get light, and to grasp, with no little chagrin, the multiplicities that conspire to shut down hopes or possibilities and so keep us trapped. To evoke these variations in imagination require intimacy with a range of affect, aspiration, self-punishment, self-deception. Insofar as we move beyond social scientific or theoretical, unmasking accounts, humanities open the past as a repository of yearning and desire, and open a wide range of aspiration and affect, imagination and tact, tainted love and rash conceit. Poetry and its allies lead us to imagine requited and unrequited love, betrayal and steadfast courage, fluid grace and tempestuous disorder, arrogance and single-minded vengeance, innocent delight and deep despair. In our texts, we find grief or anger, halting tenderness or baffled confusion, spiteful vengeance or surpassing compassion.

Modeling love of the discipline is modeling these quite specific modes of communion (or alienation) in the world – through pace and pitch of reading and exposition, through facial and bodily gesture. To win these moments of halting tenderness or cruel vengeance requires intimate touch with the contours of a mood or passion, and it requires daring to model that intimacy in gesture and speech and apt analogy. If that moment ripples through a class, we adjust our speech and gesture to acknowledge the hard-won receptivity and assimilation exhibited just then. This is warm engagement, not aloof detachment, the work of a coach or attentive companion, not a handbook or drill master.

Academics are wary of professing, of exercising the subtle arts of witness, testimony, or confession, of imaginative intimacy or affective provocation. Rant or ideological mind-bending (moralistic, religious, political, or otherwise), can be crude and more than a peripheral threat. But it is no solution, certainly not a humane solution, to duck that threat through a retreat to detached critique, dispassion and indifference, protective silence, which so easily clone a cynicism and despair. The subtle arts of witness and evocation of affect invite into one's pedagogy a willingness to allow others so briefly in our charge a well-timed glimpse of whatever sensibilities we may have won from texts, won from what we call experience, and that students can win for themselves.

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Not long ago, an Amish schoolhouse was invaded mid-morning, the children terrorized and several shot by a local deliveryman. The next day, the grandfather of one of the girls killed, from within his inconsolable grief, reminded his family, "We must not think evil of this man." I relayed these words to my class the following day, letting them sink in. Then, quietly alluded to the biblical injunction to love one's enemies. I paused and moved on. This was not preaching.

Any agnostic or anti-Christian might have grasped the point. The hush said that something had happened: perhaps someone was struck by a forgiveness that is inconceivable.

Each moment of insight is unique. On that day, and with those faces, I speak, pause, and move on. On another day I might not try for a connection at all. On a third, I might spend the hour on forgiveness, mentioning the reconciliation movement in South Africa, or traditions of pacifism or the assurance that God loves especially the least. There is no end to pedagogical possibility here, but it all presupposes alertness to moments where minor revelations, small-scale awakenings, occur, or may be waiting, if only we hear.⁹

The Amish murders are but one point of entry to the terrains we inhabit as instructors in humanities, where affect, art, and imagination abide, if we're willing. The portals are innumerable: Hamlet's doubts, Mozart's grace, Tolstoy's accounts of war and the birth of a child, the terror of unexpected death, the defilements of murder, inconceivable compassion. We have barely scratched the surface of the spiritual, humanistic and anti-humanistic resonances of 9/11. These sites of passion, affect, undergoing, and resolve beg to be tendered out to the midst of others, launched as the doubt, grace, or terror that they are -- tendered out and on to receptive selves. Words awaken affect and wisdom, the wonder of eloquence and love and the pain of affliction -- realities not to be denied.

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⁹ Heidegger and Kierkegaard both stress "the moment of vision," "glance" or Augenblick, when, as they'd put it, time starts anew in a moment of truth. See my, On Søren Kierkegaard: Dialogue, Polemics, Lost Intimacy and Time, Ashgate, 2007, Ch. 6.

To awaken affect is not to dislodge knowledge but to transform the register of its appearance and reception. Knowledge that emerges from care for the words that are “the life of the world”¹⁰ would aspire to a fine-grained sense of things that we can call “tactile” or “visceral” knowing, the sort of acquired, practiced intimacy that a rock climber has with her granite wall, or the fleshly knowledge Jacob has in wrestling his angel, or the knowledge Thoreau has of his Concord paths and ponds. It might be the intimate knowing, painful and joyful, attendant on giving birth, or attendant on a readiness for the next step, grip, or moment as one enters one’s impending future. This sort of knowing resists propositional formulation (hence Socratic ignorance is its ally).

I had passed out a short passage on how a Kantian sublime pulls the rug from under routine presumptions of cognitive supremacy and grip. When I received this responsive note from an undergraduate, I knew we were engaged in the most valuable venture. Let me give the full texture and weave of his response.

I like the idea that the sublime is the final challenge to dreamers of the grandiose. It requires release of control, at least temporarily. It demands laying down whatever weapons are most familiar to our hands. There's a reason why people wave. It's to show that they hold no weapon, that they are non-threatening and it's okay to let down some of our guard. Some people never wave. Others only wave to those like themselves. We all need to learn to wave to each other, in a

¹⁰ Simon Critchley avers, speaking with Wallace Stevens, that “Words of the world are the life of the world, and poetry is the highest use of those words.” Critchley, Things Merely Are (London: Routledge, 2005), 10.

sense. Fear is a killer, a stifler of openness to deeper things. It closes every door and window, hence puts one in darkness.¹¹

One cannot know when (if ever) one's words strike home; when they do, we're out of the dark.

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The University of Malta is geared towards the infrastructural and industrial needs of the country so as to provide expertise in crucial fields.¹² This headline sounds a death-knell for humanistic ideals of refining moral, aesthetic, or literary passions, for imaginative inflections or transformative perceptions. This frankly macabre blurb declares the death of learning from a once-vibrant site of exchange among Muslim, Roman, and Christian traditions. The demise of the humanities, so shamelessly abandoned, is the demise of “useless” imaginative variation and the withering of lyrical or memorial perception.

When a university is instrumentally linked exclusively to economic and political needs, it is no longer a site for recuperative visions, for curates of past lives and forgotten cities and resonant texts, curates who attend critically and generously to them, bringing them up from the dead into presence. In such a pedagogical desert there is no place for fleeting dialogue with this companionable figure, this striking line, this image, this chord sequence. Nor does this tolling declaration from Malta leave sites for imagining futures that might flow in as dark or lifting winds, for imagining souls taking their next tremulous step into unknowns where questions are so much more than answers and even silence has a place. There is no space for this Van Gogh crowd, this line from Rilke or the Psalms, this Socratic exchange; no room for Emersonian

¹¹ These are the words of a quite exceptional sophomore, not yet in a major.

¹² Mission statement, University of Malta, fall 2006: <http://www.um.edu.mt/about/uom>

invocations or Hepburn moments; no space for the felt-texture of King Lear's rage, Bonhoeffer's courage, or Kierkegaard's plea for knowledge that will "come alive in me."¹³

Whatever comes alive through the humanities arrives through intimacy and openness to texts, dance, and cities as these carry the arts of conversation, gesture, or praise, the habits of attentiveness, gratitude, or compassion, the contours of grieving or outrage; and as these carry the arts of seeing and coping with affliction, injustice, and estrangement (religious, existential, or otherwise). As these arts of coping and conversation and habits of attention gradually disappear from the university they do not take up residence elsewhere (at least not in a healthy elsewhere). The lives and imaginations and hearts of its students are less for their disappearance. If departments in the humanities husband these varied sensibilities, proto-religious or not, sensibilities at least in search of a heart (and mourning its absence), then they keep alive these disappearing locales where the arts of humane expression are cared for and revived.

As we've said, truths of sensibility and the heart are not propositions to test at arm's length or pocket as a creed but words that afford intimate touch with deep conviction. "Fear is a killer, a stifler of openness to deeper things. It closes every door and window, hence puts one in darkness." Such thoughts animate worlds we inherit and inhabit, inform and abandon. We seek loves or paths that are worthy, and seek truths in art or living. We want contact with Hamlet as he enacts and suffers truths of the most capacious consciousness we've had the fortune to know (and not to know). These truths are embodied as apt attunements to varied worlds and embodied in the lives of aptly beckoning exemplars that in our brief time afoot we marvel to uncover or meet in moments of illumination.

¹³ Kierkegaard's Papers and Journals, trans. Alastair Hannay, New York: Penguin, 1996. 33, (Gilleleje, 1 Aug 35). See On Søren Kierkegaard, p. 71-86.

We share a beauty, an excellence, and also share horrifying violations of these -- a cry of despair, a desecration, an unspeakable cruelty. And we share the quiet violence of indifference -- a ghost that hangs us half way between good and evil. We undergo these lights and darks in an unending exploration in and around this place called a university whose ambit can indeed welcome Rushdie's "keys to the unseen," his moments of "dark glory" -- and yes, those alluring "effs of the ineffable."